

Showdown Vote This Week

Istook Leads Charge to Save Taxpayers \$2.2-Billion

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK) will lead the charge this week against giving federal workers an extra \$2.2 billion pay raise on top of an actual cost-of-living increase.

The Bush Administration plans to provide a 1.5% cost-of-living raise, but a resolution is on the House agenda to support giving them 3.5%. The difference is \$2.2-billion per year. Because 3.5% is proposed for the military, the resolution insists that the civilian workforce should receive the higher percentage also. Congressman Tom Davis (R-VA) is principal sponsor of the resolution calling for the so-called “pay parity”. Istook opposes the resolution, especially in light of the huge federal deficit.

“It’s wrong to insist that we shouldn’t give our soldiers a raise unless we give civilian workers the same raise,” said Istook. **“There’s a world of difference between what we demand of our armed forces compared to the office jobs that most federal workers have. This resolution would also raise their pay dramatically higher than states or the private sector have given to most of their workers. And federal workers also get major fringe benefits on top of this.”**

Istook earlier this month sent a letter to Speaker Dennis Hastert and Budget Committee Chairman Jim Nussle, signed by 50 House members, expressing their disapproval of a budget which included the higher pay raise.

Istook cited the fact that the federal civil service force has gotten raises at twice rate of inflation for each of the past four years. And their annual pay is now \$12-5-billion higher each year than if they had only gotten actual cost-of-living raises over the past seven years. (Base pay is up 30.5% in those seven years, but inflation has been only 18%.)

“This is taxpayers’ money, and we need to be more responsible with it. We should not be giving raises that are twice as big as the President proposes,” said Istook. **“One-and-a-half percent is enough, especially since many will receive promotion raises on top of this. We’re being very fair to federal workers. They not only enjoy better job security and benefits than the private sector, but they’ve already been getting dramatically higher raises than almost anyone else in the country.”**

A vote on the House floor on this issue is expected Wednesday.